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Eastern Illinois University

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Course provides case study to engage students

History department looks to help students apply theories learned

BY SARAH WHITNEY
ADMINISTRATION EDITOR

Structure and partnership are the keys to engage students beyond the classroom setting.

Terry Barnhart and Rick Riccio, history professors for the historical administration department, presented Wednesday "From Research to Practice: Teaching to Engage Students" using the history museum exhibits classes as a case study.

"The whole idea is to hopefully give people who are involved in graduate education and even undergraduate education some idea of how they might structure an applied project," said Barnhart.

The presentation showed how the structure of the exhibits classes effectively teaches students how to apply theory.

In the class's first semester, stu-

dents learn theory, how to research and prepare copy for a museum exhibit.

Then, in the spring semester, the course applies students' knowledge by requiring them to construct and install the exhibit they'd researched and outlined the previous semester.

"It is a research project, but it has an applied component," Barnhart said. "You're applying this to something; you're creating some kind of public programming out of it."

The class could not be successful in its applied component without partnering with area museums.

In previous years, the class has constructed exhibits for the Coles County Historical Society, the Early American Museum, the Lincoln Log Cabin and Tarble Arts Center.

"We have certain things that they can't do. Either they don't have the expertise or they don't have the time or they don't have the staff, but they have resources that we need, too," Barnhart said.

For professors who are looking to incorporate an applied component with graduate research, partnerships are invaluable.

The partnership idea is a good thing because faculty can partner

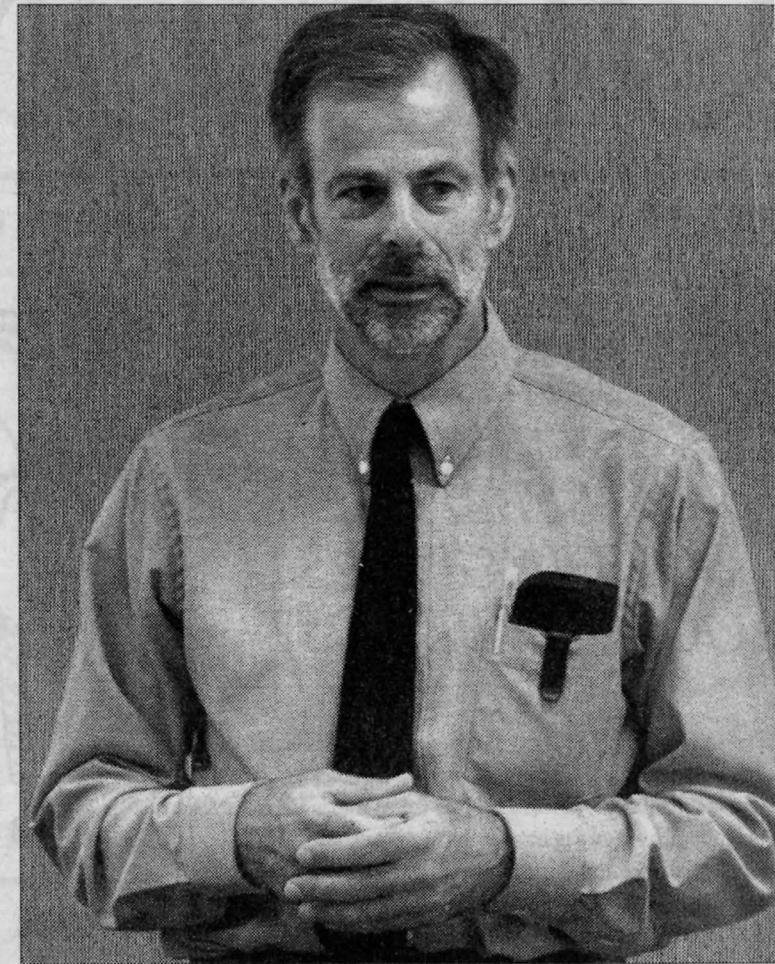
Keywords:

- ◆ Structure - To give form or arrangement
- ◆ Partnership - A relationship between individuals or groups that is characterized by mutual cooperation and responsibility, as for the achievement of a specified goal
- ◆ Apply - To put to or adapt for a special use

with other local organizations depending on what class they teach, said Riccio.

Joy Russell, an assistant professor in special education, attended the presentation because its title intrigued her, and she thought she would learn something new.

"For the classes that I teach, it's going to provide me food for thought for how I might be able to better engage my students in the community or to provide them with opportunities where they're really going to be able to apply the things they've learned," she said.



ERIC HILTNER/THE DAILY EASTERN NEWS

Richard Riccio, a museum exhibit history teacher, speaks to other Eastern faculty at the Faculty Development presentation in the Arcola-Tuscola Room in the University Union on Wednesday afternoon.